



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Fiftieth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Wednesday, 13 January 1971,  
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. R. DRISS (Tunisia).

## AGENDA ITEM 5

Measures to improve the organization of the work  
of the Council (*continued*) (E/L.1369)

1. Mr. MARAMIS (Indonesia) introduced a compromise proposal based on his own proposal as outgoing President (E/L.1369), the proposal of the representative of Lebanon to establish a preparatory working group, and the French proposal (1734th meeting) to circulate a questionnaire. The compromise proposal read as follows:

*"The Economic and Social Council*

*"Decides*

*"(a) to establish a preparatory group consisting of the four members of the Bureau and the outgoing President to prepare, with the assistance of the Secretary-General, a questionnaire and relevant background material on measures to improve the work of the Council;*

*"(b) to request the preparatory group to submit the draft questionnaire as early as possible to an informal meeting of the Council, to be called for by the President;*

*"(c) to request that the final text of the questionnaire be distributed to States Members of the United Nations by the end of January 1971;*

*"(d) to request that Governments should forward their replies to the questionnaire as early as possible and not later than the end of March 1971; and*

*"(e) to request the preparatory group to summarize replies to the questionnaire and to report to the Council at its fiftieth session."*

2. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that his delegation was pleased to be able to support the compromise proposal sponsored by the Indonesian representative, which it hoped would prove acceptable to the Council. With regard to paragraph (e), he assumed that the members of the preparatory group would not be expected to undertake the task of summarizing replies from Governments. Since the replies would be sent to the Secretary-General, it would be logical for the group to summarize them with the Secretariat's assistance, and the text should be amended accordingly.

3. Mr. ORČIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that he, too, did not think that the preparatory group should be requested to summarize the replies, and felt that paragraph (e) should be amended accordingly. As soon as it received the replies, the

Secretariat should circulate them *in extenso* to Member States in time for the fiftieth session of the Council in April/May.

4. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation did not object in principle to the establishment of a group which would prepare data with a view to singling out certain questions that would help the Council to improve its work. However, it considered that no useful purpose would be served by setting up a working group at the present time. There had been no formal discussion giving Council members an opportunity to express their views, and the views expressed during the informal discussions had not been recorded. Consequently, there were no views on the basis of which the group could prepare a list of questions.

5. The establishment of a working group at the present time would also create difficulties for Governments, which could not be expected to express an opinion unless they were properly informed of the views of Council members. Those views should be explained formally and recorded at the fiftieth session of the Council. A working group could then be set up which would have the information it needed to do its work.

6. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece), referring to paragraph (a) of the compromise proposal, said he felt that it would be inappropriate for the questionnaire to be drafted by a preparatory group; that task should be performed by the Secretariat, with the help of the President of the Council. He observed that on 30 December 1970 the Secretary-General had sent to Governments a questionnaire relating to a system of over-all appraisal of progress in implementing the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. He feared that Governments might be confused as to the relationship between that questionnaire and the questionnaire mentioned in the compromise proposal, which might also refer to the International Development Strategy. With regard to paragraph (b), he agreed that the draft questionnaire should be submitted to an informal meeting of the Council called by the President. He shared the Yugoslav representative's views concerning paragraph (e) and agreed that replies should be circulated *in extenso* to Member States, although that procedure would have financial implications. The compromise proposal should be amended to indicate that the Secretariat should prepare the questionnaire and a summary of the replies submitted by Governments, which would be discussed at an informal meeting of the Council to be held between the fiftieth and the fifty-first sessions.

7. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said he was concerned to note that the compromise solution was not winning unanimous support. The Council's main objective should be to ensure that constructive discussions would take place at the

fiftieth session, based on proper documentation and Government replies to the questionnaire, which should be prepared by a small authoritative group and submitted to Governments as soon as possible. His delegation supported the proposals contained in the note by the outgoing President (E/L.1369). With regard to paragraph (b) of the compromise proposal, he doubted whether the questionnaire could be formally approved at an informal meeting of the Council. He agreed with the Yugoslav representative that the replies to the questionnaire should be reproduced *in extenso* in a document that would be considered by the Council at its fiftieth session.

8. Mr. YOGASUNDRAM (Ceylon) welcomed the Indonesian representative's new proposal, which constituted a good compromise between the two positions taken at the preceding meeting. He agreed that a preparatory group should be set up and noted that the objections to it appeared to be based on the fact that there had been no substantive discussions on the subject in the Council. He pointed out, for the benefit of the Pakistan representative, that the Secretariat had sent out questionnaires without formal approval in the past.

9. Mr. HEDEMANN (Norway) said he was concerned about the time factor and the urgent need to improve the work of the Council. He felt that the compromise proposal was the best that could be achieved under the circumstances and was therefore eager to support it.

10. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) agreed with the Yugoslav representative that reports and summaries of Government replies should be prepared by the Secretariat as a matter of principle. He considered that a questionnaire would not be the most appropriate means of eliciting the views of Governments, since it might limit the scope of their replies. He felt that the Council should engage in a more substantive debate during the fiftieth session. He had reservations concerning paragraph (e) of the compromise proposal, but he would support the majority view with regard to paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d).

11. Mr. QUARONI (Italy) said that his delegation had been of the opinion that, before a questionnaire was sent to Governments, a working group should be established to process the various suggestions made during the informal discussions. The idea of a preliminary sifting of the background material was, however, contained in the compromise proposal, which was therefore acceptable to his delegation. As the French representative had suggested, paragraph (e) of the proposal should be amended to indicate that the summary of replies should be made, in the main, by the Secretariat.

12. Mr. GHORRA (Lebanon) said that his delegation was happy to support the compromise proposal. The very valid points raised by the Brazilian, French, Pakistan and Yugoslav representatives could be met by emphasizing that the work was to be done by the preparatory group in collaboration with the Secretariat and that Government replies would be circulated *in extenso*. The representative of the USSR had pointed out that no formal views had been expressed and had suggested that it would therefore be premature to establish a working group. It must be realized, however, that unless some decision such as that

proposed by the Indonesian representative was taken the Council might at its fiftieth session again be faced with the situation of having no formal proposals to consider. The preparatory group would act as a clearing house, process and tabulate Government replies and submit a formal report to the Council at its fiftieth session. The Council might then decide to establish a formal working group to discuss the substantive questions raised by Governments in their replies and to report back to it at its fifty-first session, when the main discussion on the question would take place. The Brazilian representative had suggested that the existence of a questionnaire might limit the scope of the discussion. That difficulty could be avoided by indicating in paragraph (d) that Governments should forward views on the subject as well as their replies to the questionnaire not later than the end of March 1971. By performing the functions proposed in the compromise proposal, the preparatory group would enable the Council to hold fruitful discussions on the subject at its fiftieth session.

13. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) said that part of the confusion seemed to stem from the fact that some members had not differentiated sufficiently between the formal and informal phases involved in consideration of the problem. It had been argued, for instance, that under the terms of the compromise proposal undue weight was being given to an informal process. It must be remembered, however, that the preparatory group would not be a policy- or decision-making body. It would merely help the Council to collect and summarize data from Governments. Once that had been done, with the assistance of the Secretariat, the Council would be in a position, at its fiftieth session, to decide whether further work on a more formal basis was necessary. In short, the proposal would very well serve the limited purpose for which it was intended.

14. Mr. AKWEI (Ghana) said that it would be difficult for his delegation to endorse the compromise proposal. Although the note by the outgoing President (E/L.1369) had been praised by those who considered that the Council should approach the matter cautiously, it had been a source of disappointment to those who felt that specific measures should be taken without delay to help the Council to improve the organization of its work. It was regrettable, therefore, that the proposal made by the representative of Norway (1734th meeting) that any working group established should be composed of the officers of the Council and one representative from each region had not been adopted. Such a group would have been more representative of the various opinions prevailing in the Council than the preparatory group proposed in paragraph (a) of the compromise proposal.

15. Furthermore, it was doubtful whether the proposed preparatory group would accomplish any meaningful work. Not all members were convinced of the need to send a questionnaire to Governments, many of which had already, in response to questionnaires issued by other bodies, expressed their views on how the work of the United Nations could be improved. In any case, if a questionnaire was sent out, its format should be decided by the Council and the replies it elicited should be summarized by the Secretariat, not the preparatory group. It would seem, therefore, that the terms of reference of the proposed preparatory group should be revised.

16. Some members had hoped that at its present organizational meetings the Council would have established a working group to examine the many suggestions that had already been made on the subject. It was true that those suggestions had been made informally, but it was unlikely that any participant in the informal discussions would have made suggestions which he knew conflicted with his Government's opinion on the matter. All that was necessary was to raise the status of the informal suggestions and thus enable the Council to consider the substance of the matter.

17. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that the compromise proposal seemed to reflect all the views expressed on the matter. Since no formal proposals had been made, it would seem premature to establish a working group; the work outlined in the compromise proposal could be done by a preparatory group. In order to allay the concern of those representatives who had expressed misgivings about the wording of paragraph (e), his delegation, which had consulted other delegations on the matter, proposed that that paragraph should be amended to read: "(e) to request the Secretary-General to circulate the full text of replies to the questionnaire upon receipt to the members of the Council". It also proposed that the following paragraph should be added to the text: "(f) to request the Secretary-General to summarize the replies to the questionnaire and to report to the Council at its fiftieth session".

18. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that objections to the compromise proposal concerned two points: whether a preparatory group or a working group should be established to prepare the questionnaire; and, whether, at the current stage, Government comments should be directed along certain lines. His delegation considered that at the present stage Government comments were necessary. It had no firm views on the question whether a preparatory or a working group should be established at that stage, but in view of the comments of the Ghanaian representative it would not object to the questionnaire being prepared by a larger group than that suggested in the compromise proposal. In order to meet the objections to which he had referred, his delegation proposed that the compromise proposal should be amended along the following lines. Paragraph (a) could be amended to read: "(a) that the Council's bureau and the preceding President of the Council, in consultation with other interested members of the Council, should prepare, with the assistance of the Secretary-General, a questionnaire and relevant background material on measures to improve the work of the Council". If that amendment was adopted, paragraph (b) would become redundant. Paragraph (c) should be amended to read: "(c) to transmit this questionnaire to States Members of the United Nations by the end of January 1971". The following paragraph should be added between paragraphs (c) and (d): "to transmit also to Member States the records of the discussions of the Council on this subject at its forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions as well as the outgoing President's note (E/L.1369)". In order to take account of the comments made by the representatives of the Soviet Union and Brazil, paragraph (d) should be amended to read: "to request Governments to forward their views on measures to improve the work of the Council as early as possible and not later than the end of March 1971". Paragraph (e) should be redrafted along the lines suggested by the Sudanese representative.

19. Mr. SZARKA (Hungary) said that his delegation still felt that it would be unwise to establish a working group until the Council had had a formal discussion on the subject at its fiftieth session. His delegation also questioned the wisdom of sending out a questionnaire to Governments; if the questionnaire was too detailed it would prejudice Governments' answers and if it was non-committal there was no need for a working group and the task could be given to the Secretary-General. It was doubtful, too, whether an informal meeting of the Council would be able to approve any questionnaire that might be prepared. Moreover, it was unlikely that many Governments would be able to forward their replies to the questionnaire by the time stipulated in the compromise proposal and any action based on an insufficient number of replies would not be very meaningful. It would seem, therefore, that the best procedure would be to place all available documents, including those prepared for the current organizational meetings, before the Council at its fiftieth session, when a decision on how to deal with the item could be taken.

20. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that whereas he had received instructions from his Government on the procedural aspects of the question he had received no instructions on its substantive aspects. It was for that reason that his delegation had suggested that before embarking on the final phase of such an important question the Council should ascertain the views of Governments.

21. With one reservation concerning paragraph (e), his delegation had supported the compromise proposal. It should be noted, however, that it regarded the proposal as a procedural rather than a substantive one. The Council was faced with a compromise and if that compromise was to be fruitful, the preparatory group should realize that while any questionnaire it might prepare could consist of detailed questions on procedure it should not include detailed questions on the institutional aspects of the problem. It would be to the Council's advantage to leave the questionnaire as general as possible. Obviously, the members of the Council should have access to the replies received to the questionnaire, but a summary of the replies prepared by the Secretariat would probably be very useful. It seemed necessary to point out that the Council might not complete its discussions on the matter at its fiftieth session and that it might have to include the item in the agenda for its fifty-first session.

22. There was a danger that the amendments suggested by the representative of Pakistan might jeopardize the compromise reached; they were, therefore, unacceptable to his delegation. Apart from the modification to paragraph (e), which his delegation had proposed, the wording of the compromise proposal should remain unchanged.

23. Mr. ANTOINE (Haiti) said that his delegation considered that the compromise proposal, with the amendments proposed by the Sudanese delegation, was a useful formula which could be adopted by the Council.

24. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) said that his delegation was in general agreement with the compromise proposal and felt that the Pakistan and Sudanese amendments made it even more acceptable. It could support the amendment to paragraph (a) proposed by the Pakistan

representative, but could not support that representative's proposal to delete paragraph (b), for it doubted whether an informal meeting of the Council could formally approve the questionnaire prepared by the preparatory group. Similarly, his delegation had doubts about the Pakistan proposal to circulate to Member States the records of the discussions in the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the Council.

25. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) considered that the Council should leave to the Secretariat the entire responsibility for drafting a comprehensive questionnaire in a form which would effectively take account of views of Member States. An effective start in Council action could be provided by a working group, which would study and synthesize the views of Member States as they were received. Thought should also be given to the possibility of sending the questionnaire to the regional economic commissions as well as to certain specialized agencies whose activities were affected by the Council's work. The working group should have a wide membership and should include officials from the Secretariat and the specialized agencies who were familiar with the Council's work. Furthermore, the working group should be assisted by experts in organization and methods.

26. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that the dual character of the compromise proposal had been noted by the Lebanese and the United States representatives. Some of its factors were formal and others were informal. Therefore, there seemed to be a choice between giving the preparatory group an informal or formal character. However, other aspects of the proposal, such as deadlines, were quite definitely formal. That dichotomy had also been recognized by the Pakistan and Sudanese representatives, who had put forward constructive amendments. His delegation was most gratified to note the constructive approach being taken by delegations; in particular, it supported the views expressed by the Hungarian representative, who had felt that Governments should be given sufficient time to reply to the questionnaire and had stressed that it would be premature to set up a working group at the present time. His delegation felt that the Council should close its discussion on the question by adopting a three-point solution which would accurately reflect the views expressed during the debate. First, a

formal exchange of views on the substance of the problem should take place at the fiftieth session of the Council. Secondly, documents reflecting the formal discussion at that session should be sent to Governments which would submit their views on the basis of that discussion. Thirdly, if the Council at its fiftieth session felt that it would be desirable or necessary to have the views of all Member States, it should request the Secretary-General to circulate a questionnaire for that purpose.

27. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said that the Secretariat had the experience and knowledge required to draft the questionnaire and should therefore be assigned that task. His delegation entirely shared the Ghanaian representative's view that the preparatory group should not be exclusive in its composition: it might perhaps be open to any member of the Council who wished to attend its meetings as an observer. In that way, all the members of the Council could be informed of the group's work. A reference to that effect might be included in paragraph (a), and in addition paragraph (e) might be reworded to cover assistance by the Secretariat and the circulation of replies *in extenso*. It would therefore be logical to insert paragraph (b) before paragraph (e). His delegation hoped that the Indonesian representative would take into account the comments of the Ghanaian, USSR and Yugoslav representatives and submit an amended text for final adoption.

28. Mr. AKWEI (Ghana) said his delegation feared that the Council would meet with difficulties if it proceeded on the basis of the compromise proposal in its present form. He believed that the Council, at its fiftieth session, should engage in a substantive discussion of measures to improve its work, for otherwise action might be postponed indefinitely. Some preparatory work would therefore be needed and a group should be set up to carry it out. If it was also felt that the group should prepare the questionnaire, then the group would have to report to a formal meeting of the Council. In that case the Pakistan representative's suggestion not to hold an informal meeting would not apply. Finally, the group should study the existing materials and suggestions received from Member States and submit the background material to the Council at its fiftieth session.

*The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.*